



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/750,833	12/29/2000	Don Eden Hale	10010039-1	9194

7590 04/01/2004

AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES
Legal Department, 51U-PD
Intellectual Property Administration
P.O. Box 58043
Santa Clara, CA 95052-8043

EXAMINER

NGUYEN, TAN D

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3629

DATE MAILED: 04/01/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/750,833

Applicant(s)

HALE ET AL.

Examiner

Tan Dean D. Nguyen

Art Unit

3629

--The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 December 2000.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 4.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Information Disclosure Statement

The prior art statement filed 12/28/00 has been received and recorded.

Double Patenting

1. The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

2. Claims 1-10, 11-20 are provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-10, 11-20 of copending Application No. 10/117,417. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because Claims 1 and 7 (or 11 and 17) of this application reads over claim 1 (or 11) of copending Application No. 10/117,417. As for the limitation of "facilitating the financial transaction", it's inherently included when combining claims 1 and 7 (or 11 and 17) or would have been obvious in view of the general teaching of virtual integration of the business model.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

3. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

4. Claims 1-10, 11-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

5. In order for the claimed invention to be statutory subject matter, the claimed invention must fall within one of the statutory classes of invention as set forth in § 101 (i.e. a process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter). In the present case, claims 1-10 are directed to “A method of using a virtual business model to transact business for a product” and claims 11-20 are directed to “A virtual business model to transact business for a product”, which is not within one of the classes of invention set forth in § 101.

6. The “method of using a virtual business model to transact business for a product” and “A virtual business model” are merely an abstract idea and do not produce a useful, tangible, concrete results.

7. “A method of using a virtual business model to transact business for a product” and “A virtual business model” are merely an abstract idea and does not reduce to a practical application in the technological arts (involving any computing system or computing network system) to carry out any functions and therefore are found to be non-statutory subject matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

8. Claims 11-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claim 11 calls for "A virtual business model to transact business for a product comprising (a) a plurality of virtual alliances ..., (b), and (c) a contracting business ...," which is vague and indefinite because it's not clear whether the model is a product (software) or system or method or merely a group of abstract ideas. Applicant needs to add further limitations into claim 11 to fit into one of the conventional patentable class above.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

9. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

10. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

11. Claims ~~1-10, 11-20~~ are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over VAN HOEK (Article "Logistics and virtual.... Information", 1998).

As for claims 1, 11, VAN HOEK discloses a method of using a business model of virtual integration to transact business process for a product comprising the steps of: (a) providing a plurality of virtual alliances for the manufacture and distribution of the product (seamless integration of the supply chain or functions and large numbers of (outside: outsourcing and sub-contracting) companies involved (with Dell Computers), outsourcing, partnering and co-operation among various players), (b) providing a plurality of virtual flows for enabling electronic communication between the plurality of virtual alliances for use in the manufacture and distribution of the product (chain via information flows, chain of connectivity in the flow of information), (c) providing a contracting business (main company entity) for coordination among the virtual alliances, and (d) using the main company entity to establish, via the virtual flows, control over the manufacture and distribution of the product by the plurality of the virtual alliances (see pages 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, especially page 8, lines 32-40, which teaches "MCC, the OEM in this case, maintains control over the supply chain by controlling and integrating the flow of information). Alternatively, the use of other similar or well known functions in the supply chain of the business model for a product would have been obvious as using other well known function.

As for claims 2-4, 12-14, these are shown on page 1, line 30-35, 47, page 7, 50-55, page 8, lines 22-27. As for claims 5-6, 15-16, these are shown on page 1, lines 35-

40, page 2, lines 1-7. Alternatively, the inclusion of other well known information of business parameter such as material/product, information, marketing and finance, etc., would have been obvious as mere monitoring other well known critical information in the virtually integrated supply chain of ARTICLE 1998. As for claims 7, 10, 17, 20, the provision of other business information (flow) includes financial information is shown on page 2, lines 35-40, 55-59, page 10, lines 10-14 (transaction cost information, customization costs, set-up cost, storing cost, POS data, market data, etc.) or inherently included in the business integrated supply chain of ARTICLE 1998 which normally cover manufacturing, marketing, and cost analysis. Alternatively, the inclusion of other well known financial information would have been obvious in view of the teaching of monitoring all information related to the manufacturing and selling of product as taught by ARTICLE 1998 above. As for claims 8, 18, this is shown in page 2, lines 5-7, 40-44, page 8, lines 20-40. As for claims 9, 19, the limitation of virtual regional hubs or distribution centers located regionally is taught on page 8, lines 5-10, or page 1, lines 30-40, wherein it's well known that computer parts for Dell are made throughout the world such as Taiwan, China, Malaysia, Mexico, etc., and the parts are assembled and sold in the United States and therefore, virtual regional hubs are created outside the United States to communicate effectively. Moreover, it's well known to an artisan that the degree/effectiveness of coordination/control varies with the number of alliances, the type of organization, geographical locations of each alliance (supplier or manufacturer), operating time of each alliance, etc., therefore, the adjusting of the control degree or effectiveness is considered as optimizing operating conditions or result effective

variables and the optimizing of result effective variables is considered as routine experimentation to determine optimum or economically feasible reaction conditions and would have been obvious to the skilled artisan. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233. For example, if the alliances is scattered throughout the globe, i.e. China, Philippine, Europe, Africa, U.S., it would have been obvious to form regional hub to effectively coordinate the communication between the alliances due to the large distance between each alliance.

12. Claims 7-10, 17-20 are also rejected (2nd time) under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over VAN HOEK as applied to claims 1-10, 11-20 above, and further in view of LEWIS et al (Article "Logistics and Information Technology: A Coordination Perspective", 1997).

The teaching of VAN HOEK is cited above. As for claims 7, 17, In a similar business environment for virtual business enterprise due to outsourcing and sub-contracting and the calling for a "value-added partnerships (or strategic alliances)", LEWIS et al is cited to control of information flows in a virtual flow train or rail wherein the information includes other well known business information such as financial flow (purchase order, waybills, and payments) to complete the management of a business transaction of a product or service (see pages 2, 3, 4, especially lines 15-20, page 5, lines 36-40,). It would have been obvious to modify the process of VAN HOEK to include other well known financial information as taught by LEWIS et al to complete the management of a business transaction of a product/service and/or completion of the Supply Chain Management or Logistics Processes Management. Moreover, it would

have been obvious to modify the process of VAN HOEK to clearly and definitively provide a plurality of virtual alliances for the manufacturing and distribution in view of the teaching of a "value-added partnerships (or strategic alliances)" as mentioned by LEWIS et al above.

As for claims 8, 18, this is also shown in LEWIS et al on page 2, lines 5-15, page 4, lines 15-23. As for claims 9, 19, this is taught on example on LEWIS et al page 4, lines 40-45. As for claim 10, the limitation of the "initiation/triggering step" is taught in LEWIS et al page 4, lines 25-30 "delivery may take place", lines 40-46 "Fedex takes care distribution or shipping". As for the limitation of the triggering of other well known business issue such as financial issue in claims 10, 20, it would have been obvious to modify the product or service of the initiation/triggering step with financial issue such as payment of bill or waybills as mentioned earlier to complete the business transaction or mere selection of other well known business issue as shown in LEWIS et al (page 4, lines 17-22, page 5, lines 36-42).

Conclusion

13. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

1. NPL: The Article "The Rise of the Virtual Enterprise" by Dr. Michael Hammer fairly teaches the claimed invention. To avoid duplicate rejections, it's cited here for applicant's awareness and notice that it could be used in future rejections to show other features not claimed previously.

2. US Patent/PG Pub: US 2003/000 2445 is cited to teach Virtual Advisor concept/mode.

Art Unit: 3629

14. Telephone inquiries regarding the status of applications or other general questions, by persons entitled to the information, should be directed to the group clerical personnel and not to the examiner. As the official records and applications are located in the clerical section of the examining Tech Center, the clerical personnel can readily provide status information without contacting the examiner. See MPEP 203.08. The Tech Center clerical receptionist number is (703) 308-1113 or <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>

In receiving an Office Action, it becomes apparent that certain documents are missing, e. g. copies of references, Forms PTO 1449, PTO-892, etc., requests for copies should be directed to Tech Center 3600 Customer Service at (703) 306-5771, or e-mail CustomerService3600@uspto.gov .


Any inquiry concerning the merits of the examination of the application should be directed to Dean Tan Nguyen at telephone number (703) 308-2053. My work schedule is normally Monday through Friday from 7:00 am through 4:30 pm.

Should I be unavailable during my normal working hours, my supervisor John Weiss may be reached at (703) 308-2702. The FAX phone numbers for formal communications concerning this application are (703) 872-9306. Informal communications may be made, following a telephone call to the examiner, by an informal FAX number to be given.

Other possibly helpful telephone numbers are:

Allowed Files & Publication	(703) 305-8322
Assignment Branch	(703) 308-9287
Certificates of Correction	(703) 305-8309
Drawing Corrections/Draftsman	(703) 305-8404/ 8335
Fee Questions	(703) 305-5125
Intellectual Property Questions	(703) 305-8217
Petitions/Special Programs	(703) 305-9282
Terminal Disclaimers	(703) 305-8408
Information Help Line	1-800-786-9199

dtn
March 30, 2004


DEAN T. NGUYEN
PRIMARY EXAMINER